

THE PLEADING OF THE LAST MESSENGER

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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 6, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.”
Mark 12:6-9.

BRETHREN, you know the story of God's dealing with Israel, and Israel's dealing with God. The Lord chose their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He made them a race separated unto Himself, He brought them out of Egypt from under the iron yoke, He led them through the Red Sea, He fed them for forty years in the wilderness, He led them about and tutored them, even as a man teaches His son. In due time He brought them into the land which flows with milk and honey, and He put them under a dispensation eminently gentle and full of tenderness, where as a nation they might enjoy unbroken prosperity, “sitting every man under his vine and under his fig tree, none making them afraid.” All that He required of them was that He should be their God, and that they should put no idols in His place, but should obey His statutes. Alas! From the first they copied the nations among whom they dwelt, they set up the gods of Egypt when they were in the wilderness, and in Canaan they went astray after the polluted deities of the nations. They worshipped defiled gods with rites obscene; they even passed their children through the fire to Moloch, and did horrible things which angered the Most High. In His long-suffering He sent them prophets one after another—prophets who received unworthy treatment at their hands whenever they rebuked their sins. The prophets were derided, persecuted, and even slain with the sword. God in great patience sent them more of His messengers, some of them grandly eloquent, like Isaiah and Ezekiel; others of them full of tears, like Jeremiah, or clothed with dignity, like Daniel. They warned the people, and ceased not to plead with them, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. Cruel treatment awaited many of the servants of the Lord; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder.

Israel rejected the servants that came from the great Householder asking for the rent of His vineyard. They repudiated the claims of God, and cast off allegiance to Him with contempt and disdain, until at last the nation was led into captivity, and in the end only lingered on the chosen soil as a mere remnant. Judah wept upon the dunghill, whereas before she was adorned with bridal ornaments, and sat upon the throne. The adversary ruled in the halls of David, for the days of Herod, the Idumaeen tyrant, had come. The Roman yoke was heavy upon the people; their sins had brought them low. God, in His infinite compassion, gave them one more opportunity. He had one Son, His Well-beloved Son, and He sent Him to His Israel. With lips that dropped mercy, and with eyes that overflowed with tenderness, He came. “Oh, that you had known,” He said, “even you, in this your day”! He wept over the city which would not be saved. But His warning and His weeping were lost upon the blinded people. Those who had rejected the prophets also rejected the Lord; the fate of the servants was repeated in “the Heir.” “Let us kill Him,” they said, and they put Him to the death of the cross. You know the story; it is full of infinite mercy on God's part, and of immeasurable guilt on the part of man. God seemed to out-do Himself in His long-suffering, and man seemed to out-do himself in his wanton defiance of the Most High. Sin culminated in the murder of the Son of God, it reached its utmost height of horror when the cry was heard, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Yes, they crucified the Lord of Glory.

What has this to do with us? I am not going to preach this morning merely to rehearse a piece of ancient history which has no bearing on today; I do not so regard the death of our Lord. My anxiety is to reach the consciences of living men, and if possible, to win to the Blessed Heir of all things, who has risen from the dead, some of those who have had a share in His death. I would bring to the Great Householder the fruits of the vineyard which He Himself has planted, and I would move many hearts to relent towards Him at the remembrance of the wicked injuries which have been done to His servants and to His Son. May the Spirit of God silently move over this audience at this time, as I try to use this passage, not in its strictest application, but with such an application as I am sure the Spirit of God will approve! May He bless the Savior's word to present uses that we may this day repent!

The fact is that unless changed by divine grace, we have all refused to pay to our great God the service which is due Him. He has put us here and given us this life, like a vineyard, for us to cultivate, but many have cultivated that vineyard entirely for themselves—themselves or their families and friends, and not for their God, their Maker. "God is not in all their thoughts." Now, the Lord has sent to such many messengers. We have had no prophets in these days living among us, but we have the Word of God and the record of the testimonies of His inspired messengers and these virtually speak to us. We have Moses and the prophets; they are speaking to us even now. Besides that, we have been surrounded by men of God, and encompassed by holy women who have appealed to us on God's behalf. They have been urged to speak by the love of their hearts, and they have tried to bring us to repent of past rebellion and to yield ourselves at once to God. Many are the voices around us and within us which persuade to render unto the great Householder His due, but in many cases none of these have been successful. Last of all God has sent to each one of us His Son, that He in His own person may lovingly repeat with greater emphasis the requirements of the Lord of love. The incarnate wisdom now cries to us, "My son, give Me your heart." Jesus warns us, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." He sets before us the way of reconciliation, and bids us believe in Him and live. With many a charming parable He would draw the far-off prodigal home to the bosom of forgiving love. The very coming of the Son of God in human form, as Emmanuel, God with us, is love's great plea for reconciliation. Who can resist so powerful an argument? It is in the person of Jesus Christ that God makes His last and strongest appeal to the human conscience. By the Christ of God, He virtually says this morning, "Turn you, turn you: why will you die, O house of Israel?" And I would to God that the answer might be from many a heart, "Come, let us return unto the Lord; for He has torn, and He will heal us." Cause it to be so, O great Spirit!

Three things I shall speak of this morning. The first will be *the amazing mission*, "Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, they will reverence my son." Secondly, *the astounding crime*, "they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard." And therefore, thirdly, *the appropriate punishment*, of which the text says, "What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?" What vengeance can be sufficient for so base a deed?

I. First, then, let us dwell for a few moments upon THE AMAZING MISSION, "Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also."

Please remember concerning the Son of God, sent to us to reconcile us to the Father that *He came after many rejections of divine love*. As to Israel He followed the prophets, so to us He comes after many others. There are none among us, I should think, who have been left without admonitions and exhortations from God. He began early with some of us, calling us, like Samuel, when as yet we were children. He repeated those calls to us all through the days of our youth. It was never cheap to some of us to sin; we never went astray but what there was a something within which plucked us by the sleeve, and warned us of our wrong-doing. We have been called to God by most earnest entreaties of faithful men and affectionate women. Discourses have been addressed to us who might have moved hearts of stone, but yet, though stirred for the moment, we remain obstinate enemies to God, dishonest to His claims, careful of this world and forgetful of the world to come. After all these refusals, if the Lord had closed the casket of mercy, and had opened the vials of vengeance and had poured them out upon us, who could have blamed Him? Instead of which He still, in His long-suffering pity, speaks to us by His Son. Jesus Christ, by whom He made the worlds, condescends to be the Messenger of the covenant of grace. He gently reminds us of our offenses against the great Father, of our willfulness in not returning to Him, and of the tremendous peril which we incur by remaining in opposition to the great God. The very exist-

ence of our Savior gives us warning of our sin, of our ruin, and of the only way of escape. If it is so, that we have rejected God's claims so often, will not the time past suffice us to have played this dreadful game? Have we not had enough of trifling with our souls? O Lord, how long shall men act the part of fools and risk their immortal souls? Oh, will they not at length yield to wisdom? Jesus Himself, by the preaching of the gospel, pleads with us; are we determined to persevere in our evil ways? Do we not feel some tender relenting? Does not a "still small voice" urge us to arise and go to our Father? After many provocations, will we not at length yield to the God of grace?

Remember, that Jesus Christ when He comes to us today, as the messenger of the Father, *comes for no personal ends*. When the messengers were sent by the householder, it was to claim the householder's rent; when the heir came, it was for the same purpose. So it is in the human emblem, but in the divine, this becomes less conspicuous. When Jesus pleads with us, although He urges us to render unto God our love and our obedience, yet God does not stand in need of these as the householder stood in need of his rents. What is it to the infinite Jehovah whether you serve Him or not? If you rebel against God, will He be less glorious? If you will not obey the Lord, what difference can it make to His boundless happiness? Will His crown shine the less brightly, or His heaven be less resplendent because you choose to be a rebel against Him? What if the straw strives with the fire, will the fire be quenched by it? If a gnat should contend with yonder blast furnace, you know what the end would be. It is for your own sake that God would have you yield to Him, how can it be for His own? If He were hungry He would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are His. He can crush whole worlds to dust, "or with His word or with His nod," and do you think He has anything to gain from you? You alone will be the gainer or the loser, therefore when Jesus prays you to repent, believe in the selflessness of His heart; believe that it can be nothing but the tenderest regard for your well-being which makes Him warn you. Hear how Jehovah puts it, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." A messenger after many rejections, a messenger who comes solely out of love to us, ought to have our respectful attention.

Let us see for a minute who this messenger, is. *He is one greatly beloved of His Father*, and in Himself *He is of surpassing excellence*. The Lord Jesus Christ is so inconceivably glorious that I tremble at any attempt to describe His glory. Assuredly, He is very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, and yet He deigned to take upon Himself a human form. He was born an Infant into our weakness, and He lived as a carpenter to share our toil. When He quits the bench and the saw, it is to follow still more laborious ways as a teacher and healer of the people. He was the lowly and suffering teacher of the blessed will of the Father. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and yet in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, and yet He took a towel and washed His disciples' feet. Such is He who pleads with you. So majestic and so compassionate, so great, and yet so good, will you refuse Him? If I plead with you, I am but as you are, flesh of your flesh, but if Jesus speaks to you, I beseech you by the glory of His Godhead, as well as by the tenderness of His manhood, do not refuse Him. Because of His Godhead you must not dare to harden your hearts. He is God's Well-beloved, and if you are wise, He will be yours. Do not turn your back on Him whom all the angels worship. Beware, lest you reject One whom God loves so well, for He will take it as an insult to Himself; He that despises the anointed of God has blasphemed God Himself. You put your finger into the very eye of God when you slight His Son. In grieving the Christ you do vex the very heart of God, therefore do not do so. I beseech you, then, by the love which God bears to His Son, to listen to this matchless messenger of mercy, who would gladly persuade you to repent.

I have already said that He is so glorious that I cannot describe Him; I will therefore only say that *His graciousness is as conspicuous as His glory*. There was never such a one as He. None of us loves men as Christ loves them, and if the loves of all the tender-hearted in the world could be run together, they would make but a drop compared with the ocean of the compassion of Jesus. Of old His delights were with the sons of men, and though He might have been happy enough among the angels, yet He left their company that He might take up this inferior race. Yes, He espoused our nature and became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, for love of that chosen company whom He calls His Bride. He hid not His face from shame and spitting, nor His body from the shedding of blood, nor His soul from deadly agony, but He loved the church and gave Himself for it. It is this lover of souls that becomes God's ad-

vocate with us, and pleads with us that we would cease from our rebellion. Do not refuse Him! If He were stern and unloving, I could imagine that all the obstinacy of your nature might be awakened, but His love, which passes the love of women, deserves another treatment. If you reject Him, He answers you with tears; if you wound Him, He bleeds out cleansing; if you kill Him, He dies to redeem; if you bury Him, He rises again to bring us resurrection. Jesus is love made manifest—

*“Heart of stone, relent, relent;
Break, by Jesus’ cross subdued!
See His body, mangled, rent,
Covered with a gore of blood;
Sinful soul, what have you done?
Crucified God’s only Son!”*

Furthermore, *His manner is most winning*. When I have been pleading for men with God, and I have ceased my pleading, I have feared that something in my tone or in my manner would cause my pleading to fail. I am not, perhaps, as tender as I should be, nor is there sufficient pathos in my tones. If I could do better, I would go to any school to learn. God has put me often to the school of suffering to instruct me in this respect, and yet I do confess my failings with deep regret. But when Jesus, my Lord, pleads with you, this charge cannot be laid against Him. His pleading is perfect. When Jonah preaches, his tones are harsh, and his spirit forbidding, but that can never be said of Jesus. When Jeremiah weeps, there is an undertone of bitter complaint within the sweet sorrow of his love, but it is never so with Jesus, “Never man spoke like this man.” If ever His words thunder—as they often do—even in that thunder there is heard the voice of love. When He flashes with the lightning of judgment against Scribes and Pharisees, yet soft mercy-drops follow every flame of fire. He is stern because He is tender; His utterances of terror are born of a love which dares not conceal the truth, even though it breaks its heart in the telling of it. God is love, and Christ is God’s love incarnate among men. Therefore, my hearer, if you see anything about *me* of which you disapprove, censure me if you will, but be all the more attentive to my Lord, about whom there is nothing but what is wooing and melting. God has sent to you His own Well-beloved Son; I implore you, do not refuse Him. My heart trembles at the bare suspicion that even one of you should reject the pleading of one so jealous for your eternal welfare.

Yet again, when God sends His Son to plead with men, remember He does not urge us to anything which will be for our loss and detriment; *obedience to Him is happiness for ourselves*. He does not urge us to follow a life of misery, nor to begin a course which will end in our destruction. Far from it. The ways in which He would have us run are ways of pleasantness, and all the paths in which He would lead us are paths of peace. Even repentance is charming sorrow, far sweeter than the joy of sin. They that repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ find such joy, such happiness, that earth becomes to them the vestibule of heaven. The joy-bells ring within the Father’s house, when a soul returns to its home. The great Father leads the joy, and all the household rejoice with Him. To persuade you to be holy is to induce you to be happy; to urge you to seek God is to urge you to seek your own best welfare; to urge you to lay down the weapons of rebellion and be reconciled to the Most High, is to set before you the wisest, safest, and best course that you can follow. Therefore, hear Him. The Lord God out of heaven cries to you, “This is My beloved Son; hear Him.” Well may you hear Him, when every word that He speaks intends your salvation.

Remember, once more, that if you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. *He is God’s ultimatum*. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent, heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ is rejected, hope is rejected. Neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead, for Jesus has risen from the dead, and you have refused Him. I should like every person here that is unconverted to recollect that there is no other gospel, and no more sacrifice for sin. I have heard talk of “a larger hope” than the gospel sets before us; it is a fable, with nothing in Scripture to warrant it. Rejecting Christ, you have rejected all; you have shut against yourself the one door of hope. Christ, who knows better than all pretenders, declares that, “He that believes not shall be damned.” There remains nothing but damnation for those who believe not in Jesus. “There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” This is clear; for heaven’s grandest effort has been made. What more can God do? O heavens and earth! I appeal to you, what more

can Jehovah do? If He gives His Son to die, and that great sacrifice is rejected, what remains? Infinite wisdom has done its best, and infinite love has surpassed itself; a fearful looking for of judgment is all that despisers may expect.

Thus this amazing mission is set forth before you, and I pray you, as you love yourselves, do not refuse Him that speaks, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, how shall they escape who despise Him that speaks from heaven?

II. I beg your attention while I look, in the second place, to THE ASTOUNDING CRIME. It was nothing less than an astounding crime, that when this householder sent his well-beloved son, the husbandmen said one to another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard." "No," says one, "we never killed the Son of God." I will not charge you with having done so *literally*; that were to make myself chargeable with exaggeration. But a man may do virtually what he cannot do actually. If a murder is committed and I approve of it, if my own principles lead up to it, if I feel no indignation against it, but express myself very coolly about it, if there is reason to believe that if I had been there, I would have done the same, then I may be in the sight of God a partaker in the crime. There are many among us who are guilty of the body and blood of Christ. The hymn we just now sung does not bring a groundless charge—

*"Yes, your sins have done the deed,
Driven the nails that fixed Him there,
Crowned with thorns His sacred head,
Plunged into His side the spear,
Made His soul a sacrifice,
While for sinful man He dies!"*

Now, I say this, that all those who persistently deny the deity of Christ, virtually kill Him, for the Son of God is not alive if His Godhead is not in existence. It is essential to the idea of Christ, the heir of all things, that He is God, and to deny His Godhead is to stab at His heart.

All those who deny His atonement also slay Him, for the blood of sacrifice is the life of the Christ of God. The very essence of His Christhood, the soul of His character as Jesus, lies in His having been appointed to be a propitiation for sin. No cross no Christ, no atonement no cross. Deny the great expiation for sin, and to the full extent of your power you have annihilated the Christ. As far as you can do it, you have destroyed the Savior.

"Well, we have not done that," cry some of you. "We have been no opposer of the deity or sacrifice of Jesus." But let me remind you that if you do not judge Him to be worthy of your most careful thoughts, if you are indifferent to His claims, and refuse to obey His gospel, you have virtually put Him away. To you it is the same as if there were no Christ—

*"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"*

You have virtually answered "It is nothing." You have set Christ down as nothing compared with the business of daily life, and thus you have virtually slain Him; you have put Him out of existence so far as you are concerned. In the little world of your mind there is no living Savior; He is dead and buried to you, and the claims of God which He pleads you will not think upon. You have been occupied all the week with trivial amusements, or unimportant discussions, but you have not deigned to think of Him whose advent into the world is so great a wonder, that if you never thought of anything else, you might be justified in a life of devout meditation. He who deserves all your thoughts gets none of them. You have nothing to do with Christ, His cross, His people, or His cause, and therefore—I say it with no harshness, but with much grief—you are killers of Christ, and are guilty of His blood. I charge you with making away with your Savior. I press the accusation home, and trust that it will strike you with horror.

I have still closer work with some of you, who are most assuredly guilty. You were once members of the Church; you came to the communion table, where they gather who remember His precious body and blood; you used to glory in His name, but you have gone back, you have denied the faith, you have ceased to be followers of the Lamb. Now, these are no words of mine, but inspired words—You have "crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." You are beyond all question among

those who have cast the heir out of the vineyard and slain Him, deliberately turning your backs upon His sacred cause. The Lord have mercy on you! You have had no mercy on Christ, or on yourselves.

I must press this home upon a great many more who have heard of Christ, and believe Him to be God, and assent to all the truth about Him, but who yet have never yielded themselves to His authority. O sirs, what have you done? You have preferred the world to Christ; you have chosen Barabbas and condemned the Savior. You have said to the claims of Jesus, "Wait." For whom has your Lord had to wait? What! For a harlot? For a bribe of gold? For your giddy pleasure? When a great question is postponed to let another take precedence of it, we do not object if that other is of pre-eminent importance, but can you say that anything has a greater claim on you than the Son of God? Is there anything that has a greater right to your thoughts, to your consideration, to your love, than the great salvation which Jesus Christ has worked out? If you have pushed the Lord Jesus Christ out of the first place, He will occupy no other, and therefore you have virtually un-Christed Him, and you are guilty of His blood. You must either be justified by Him or you must be condemned by Him. There is no third course to take; you must either believe in Him or disbelieve Him. Now, to refuse to believe Him is to make Him a liar, and to make Him a liar is virtually to slay the Lord of truth. His blood must be on you by faith to cleanse you, or else it will lie on you to condemn you, as it did the Jews of old.

What was the reason why these husbandmen, these dressers of the vineyard, dared thus to treat the heir? The reason is one which presses upon those here present who have rejected Christ. They did it, first, because *they had enjoyed a long immunity from punishment*. They had not been at once punished for their defiance of their lord. They had rejected his messengers without provoking him to war; they had gone on to stone and slay others of his servants, and the householder had not come upon them to overthrow them. The first time they mocked at the messenger they were somewhat afraid, they feared lest soon the sword of the prince whom they had defied would threaten their gates. But as there was no invasion they grew bold. The next messenger they slew, and washed their hands, in presumption, saying, "Nothing will come of it." They grew at last to be very hardened. I know not what they said, but I conceive that certain of them propagated the theory that their lord took no notice of what they did, or that he was too loving to punish them severely. "See!" they said, "He only sends fresh messengers if we kill the old ones, and even if we kill his son he will bear it. Let us not imagine that he will take vengeance. He is love, and even should we murder his son, he will lay up in store for us a larger hope. At any rate," they seemed to say, "We will run all risks. We will test his graciousness. We will kill his son, and so challenge him to do his worst."

Ungrateful men abuse God's long-suffering today as they did of old. They say, "Well, I have refused the gospel a long time, I have put aside many appeals, but I am not dead, nor struck with blindness, nor smitten down with a stroke. I can go on at least a little longer in safety. I may refuse Christ yet again, for God is merciful." "Certain teachers," you say, "tell us that God is so good, that if we even kill His Son He will take no account of it. We will kill His Son, and so we will reject the atonement, and trample on the precious blood, and yet we doubt not all will come right in the long run, and the evil of our crime will prove to be only temporary." You do not put your thoughts into those words, but you are saying as much by your actions. You dare not *say* it, and yet it lurks in your hearts, and works itself out in your deeds. You are going to run the dreadful risk of trifling with the Son of God. To you this seems a little thing, but horror takes hold of me at the thought of it. O sirs, I will be no partner in your crime. I will not cease to warn you that it must be of all risks the most tremendous. Gracious as He is—and God has proved His grace by sending His Son—yet God is not effeminate or unjust. If you refuse the mercy which He so freely proffers you, He will deal with you in His justice. He is the Judge of all the earth and He must do right. Remember how He puts it, "My sword shall be bathed in heaven." "If I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies" (Deut 32:41). For as truly as He is love, so truly is He holiness. He is wondrous in His power to forgive, but He is also terrible out of His holy places. "If the sinner turn not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready." "Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

The great reason, however, why these husbandmen determined to kill the heir was this; they said, "*Then the inheritance shall be ours.*" This is what the heart of man vainly desires. It says, "Let us be rid

of this troublesome talk of religion, and then we can live for ourselves, and study our own pleasure without remorse of conscience. Are we not our own? Who shall be lord over us? If we are rid of this Jesus, we shall not have this claim being always made upon us, that we are God's creatures, and that we ought to live to Him. We do not intend to serve God. We will pay no rent to this householder. We will be our own proprietors. God shall have nothing from us. Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice? If we can get rid of this Christ business we can live as we wish, and do as we please, and no one will call us to account. If we can persuade ourselves that religion is not true, we shall then care nothing for checks and warnings, but we shall take our full swing and enjoy ourselves without stint. A short life and a merry one will suit us. We might enjoy ourselves if this matter of God, and Christ, and eternity, could be disposed of." Yes, young man, this is what your prototype thought when he said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me." Then he gathered all together, and went into a far country, and spent his "substance in riotous living." This is what you hanker after. But your folly is exceedingly great. I grieve as I look into your young face and read the idle dream of your heart. You little know what a tyrant he serves who lives as he wishes. May God grant that I may never live as my sinful lusts would make me live! I had rather be a machine and be compelled to do always what is right than have free will, and with that free will give myself up to do that which is wrong. But there is no need to be made into a machine, the grace of God can make you as free in holiness as in sin. Grace can make you freer in the service of God than in the service of yourself.

Self lies at the bottom of all rejection of Christ—"Let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Ah, my hearer! It will not be yours, and if it were yours for a little while, and you could do just as you pleased with it, yet remember that the inheritance which is so gained will soon pass away, and you yourself will soon have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are bad. And what will *you* do who have slain your Savior? What will you do in that day, which have lived and died unsaved?

III. I must close with that third head, which is so dreadful to me, THE APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT. I do not suppose that the thought of this subject will be half so dreadful to anybody here who is unconverted as it is to me. I tremble as I meditate upon the wrath to come. How glad I would be if I had not to preach from such a theme! But I must preach from it, or be a traitor to God, and an enemy to you. If you perish, your blood will be required at my hands, if I do not warn you of the punishment of sin. This is how the Savior put it, "When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" He leaves our conscience to award the penalty. He leaves our imagination to prescribe a doom sufficient for a crime so base, so daring, so cruel. They have killed the only son of their lord, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Here I must interject a terrible passage, which burdens me to deliver. At this present moment I am afraid that this parable is being written out again in the history of the Church of God. God has put into His vineyard, or allowed to come into His vineyard, a number of religious teachers who are not rendering to Him the honor due. Those religious teachers to whom I refer are not teaching the gospel as it is delivered in Holy Scripture, but they are adapting it to the age, and to the scientific knowledge of the period. They are described in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, Harken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise Me, The Lord has said, You shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." The thoughts of their own minds are given instead of the revelation of God. Thus they set up another gospel, which is not another, but there are some that trouble you. My fear is that the Lord will not much longer bear with these husbandmen. He will not long bear these "prophets of the deceit of their own hearts." He will bring an everlasting reproach upon them, and cut them off in His anger. He will destroy those wicked men, and He will give His vineyard to other husbandmen, who will deal more faithfully with the souls of men. I feel in my own soul that it must be so. I dare not live as a preacher of my own inventions. I dare not die as a preacher of my own thoughts, or of the thoughts of other men. I must tell my Master's message or be accursed. The spirit of the age is the spirit of proud self-sufficiency; be it ours to sit at Jesus' feet. My Lord will one day say to me, "I gave you a message, did you deliver it? I bade you speak in My name, did you speak My words or your own?"

I gave you a revelation; did you deliver that revelation as best you could? Or did you invent a new thing out of your own brain?" I know how I shall answer. I fear that a terrible doom awaits those who go after the fashionable falsehoods of the day. Be they clergymen or dissenting ministers, an unutterably horrible damnation from the right hand of God awaits those who prostitute the office of the ministry for the delivery of human philosophies instead of teaching the gospel of the blessed God. Brethren, beware that none of us sin against the Holy Spirit by setting up our dreams in rivalry with His certainties. Pray for those who do so, lest God deal with them speedily in vengeance. The Lord have mercy upon all false prophets, and bring them humbly and tremblingly to His feet, lest they ensnare the people yet more, to the overthrow of this nation, and the taking away of the candlestick out of its place.

I return to you whom I have already addressed. You have crucified the Son of God by refusing to believe in Him. What shall the Lord do to you when He comes? The sentence cannot be too severe, for the crime is beyond measure horrible. It must be the highest form of punishment known to the law. They slew the servants, and they slew the heir; no temporary punishment can meet the case. Those who plead for a light doom for such a crime must, in their own hearts, be rebels. Those who are evermore making light of hell are probably doing it in the hope of making it easy for themselves. He is the devil's advocate who would judge the punishment of the impenitent to be a light one; God's true servants say, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Our Lord leaves our own consciences to depict the overwhelming misery of those miserable men who carry their rebellion to its full length.

In the chapter which we read (Matthew 21), our Lord gives us a terrible word. Comparing Himself to the stone which should be the foundation, but which the builders reject, He says, "On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." Sinner, if you reject the Savior, you will have to feel His full weight. Boundless in power, infinite in majesty, *the whole weight of Him will fall on you*. Will you think that over? Since He breaks the nations in pieces with a rod of iron, judge you His power; since from His presence heaven and earth flee away, judge you His power. But whatever that power may be, you will have to feel the full force of it. This foundation stone falling upon you shall grind you to powder. I will not dwell further upon this tremendous thought, but I will repeat it in set and solemn form; the full weight of the incarnate God, in the day of His wrath, you will have to bear. It is put in another way in that expression—"The wrath of the Lamb." Is not that a marvelous combination, "The wrath of the Lamb"? Love when it turns to jealousy is the fiercest of all passions, and when the love of Christ in infinite justice shall be turned into holy indignation against unrighteousness, then it will be something terrible to think of, and to bear it will be the second death. Are you prepared to bear the awful weight of a Savior's anger? No, you are not. Come, then, to Jesus. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little." O my hearers, my dear hearers, do not refuse the Lord Jesus, who now pleads with you. I am not worthy to be His ambassador; I am not fit for the office, but yet I would plead with you as a loving brother. Will you lose your souls? Will you reject Christ? O sirs, will you refuse the Son of God? Men and women, can you be as mad as to live and die without the Savior? Are you so far gone as this? Turn, I beseech you, turn this day. Lord, turn them, for your dear Son's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 21:18-46.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 517, 388.**

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